



Fact Sheet

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control • www.scdhec.gov

Beach Safety

<p>What are some things I need to know about swimming at the beach?</p>	<p>In some places, swimmers may encounter strong undertows or ocean currents, known as rip currents or riptides. These can be so strong that they can carry swimmers away from shore before you know what's happening. Rip currents are often found near fixed objects like piers and reefs.</p> <p>Sand reflects the UV rays from the sun and can cause severe sunburn. Plus, 90% of all skin cancers can be attributed to the sun. This is true even for infrequent but more intense exposure.</p> <p>Jellyfish inhabit every major ocean. Most live in shallow coastal waters. The adult jellyfish drifts in the water with limited control over its movements. Although most jellyfish that inhabit South Carolina waters are harmless to humans, there are a few that require caution. For more information about jellyfish, refer to our Jellyfish Fact Sheet.</p>
<p>How can people be safer at the beach?</p>	<p>The best thing anyone can do to stay safe is and around water is to learn to swim. Also, never swim alone, always swim with a buddy. And don't swim out too far.</p> <p>Keep a constant eye on children. Children or inexperience swimmers should use a US Coast Guard approved personal flotation device (PFD), don't rely on substitutes such as air filled flotation aids or toys. Those items can shift, puncture, lose air or slip off.</p> <p>Stay away from piers and pilings in the water. If you are caught in a current, don't panic and don't swim against the current. Swim parallel to the shore until the water stops pulling you, then swim back to shore. If you can't get back to the beach, tread water and wave for help.</p> <p>Stop swimming and get out of the water as soon as you see or hear a storm.</p> <p>Protect your eyes and skin from the sun. Use sunscreen with at least an SPF of 15. Apply the sunscreen liberally. There is no truly "waterproof" sunscreen. However, some sunscreens are water-resistant, which means they should be re-applied every 40 minutes if you have been swimming and/or sweating. Wear sunglasses with 100% UV protection. If you do get sunburned, do not cover it with a thick salve or moisturizer. Those will trap heat and cause more damage. Get the skin in contact with cool, not cold or icy, water or pure aloe vera immediately. You may also want to take an over-the-counter anti-inflammatory such as aspirin to reduce pain and swelling.</p> <p>Be careful when investigating jellyfish that have washed ashore. Although they may be dead, they may still be capable of inflicting stings. Remember to take precautions when removing tentacles after contact or additional stings may result.</p>

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

Region 7

Serving Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester Counties

Public Health Office • 4050 Bridge View Drive • Suite 600 • N. Charleston, SC 29405 • Phone: (843) 746-3800 • www.scdhec.gov